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EXTENSION SERVICE PLANS FOR 1936

A radio talk by Dr. C. W. Warburton, Director of Extension Work, United States Department of Agriculture, delivered in the National 4-H Club Radio Program, February 1, 1936, and broadcast by a network of 58 associate NBC radio stations.

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The Extension Service is entering the new year with increased facilities and opportunities for serving rural people. The Congress, by the passage of the Bankhead-Jones Act, authorized increased federal appropriations for payments to the States for cooperative extension work, thus placing the Extension Service on a more substantial basis and providing for continuing expansion. The new funds provided for the current fiscal year was in substitution for grants made to the Extension Service during the past two years by the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, but sufficient additional money was provided to make possible some expansion in the employment of home demonstration and 4-H Club agents. In many counties and in some States, more liberal appropriations for the support of extension work were made during the year. During the past year county and community committeemen became sufficiently familiar with the details of adjustment programs to be able to carry on with less assistance from extension agents, thus enabling the agents to devote a greater part of their efforts to other phases of extension work. If production control had continued, a still larger part of the details of handling the program would have been taken over by committeemen in 1936. Now that the Supreme Court decision of January 6 has changed the picture, farmers must depend more on individual initiative and on economic information to keep from building up great surpluses of agricultural commodities, and the Extension Service has an added obligation to make available to farmers everywhere the best possible information on the agricultural situation, good farm management, economic production, and soil conservation. The need for adjustment has not passed.

Extension workers and farm people are now engaged in studying the facts regarding the local and national agricultural situation and determining for themselves what adjustments are necessary in their farming practices, both with reference to farm income and soil conservation. The reports that come in to us indicate that farmers very generally are showing great interest in this study. Many States also have set up local groups for discussion of some of the important questions of the day. In Virginia alone about 750 of these local discussion groups have been organized.

There is widespread interest among rural people in soil improvement and the control of soil erosion, and many farmers are cooperating with the Extension Service and the Soil Conservation Service in so changing their farm practices as to lessen these farm losses. Farm people are beginning to realize that for many years they have mined their soils or permitted their best lands to wash or blow away, and many of them are now awakening to the obligation not only to themselves but to future generations to retain and even to improve this national heritage.

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The new funds available to the Extension Service are enabling the State Colleges to cooperate with a considerable number of additional counties in the employment of home demonstration and 4-H Club agents. This gives the Extension Service much wider opportunity to serve rural women and rural young people. County agricultural agents also should have more time this year to devote to 4-H Club work. The Extension Service program for 1936 looks toward the development of a better rural life through increased returns to farmers, increased assistance to farm women and increased membership in 4-H Clubs.

I think we all realize the value of 4-H Club work in interesting rural young people in farm life, in assisting them in conducting useful projects, and in providing social opportunities. We know too that many 4-H Club members have found in their 4-H Club work opportunity not only to earn spending money, but to lay foundations for a college education or to establish themselves in farming on their own account. There is need for further expansion of the economic side of 4-H Club work. We are expanding the cultural side also through such means as the music appreciation program to which you have just listened.

In 1936 I see as an essential part of the Extension program of each county agricultural or home demonstration agent the carrying on of an adequate program of 4-H Club Work. There are still many rural boys and girls of 4-H Club age in every county who have not participated in 4-H Club work, and who should have the opportunity to enjoy its advantages. It is our duty to see that they have this opportunity.